

Smooth Muscle

Alex Gebbie
Mackenzie Lecchi
Zach Muir
Brianna Parkinson
Ziggy Raven
Manaia Thomas-Bloom
Aline Yamaura

@ Project Space
27 - 30 May 11am - 3pm

Opening 26 May 4.30pm
Artist panel 5pm

Smooth Muscle

Curated by Brianna Parkinson &
Sarah Chapman

Featuring recent works by Alex
Gebbie, Mackenzie Lecchi, Zach Muir
Brianna Parkinson, Ziggy Raven,
Manaia Thomas-Bloom & Aline Yamaura

In a biological sense 'smooth
muscle' is a tissue composed of
sheets or strands of smooth
muscle cells. Found in the walls
of hollow organs (eg the heart, the
stomach, the uterus) these muscles
contract without any voluntary
control.

Smooth Muscle explores the body as
an object - a material, fleshy, and
corporeal object - as well as the
body as a social, cultural, and
discursive construct that comes
into social existence through
relations of power and language.

Each student artist included in
this group show employs a
process-based practice that
experiments with their chosen
materials and explores
innovative ways to express their
ideas. The works presented -
textile, found-object installation,
painting - address the themes of
embodiment, identity and
agency through the artist's
respective perspectives.

The show is accompanied by a
collection of writings contributed
by four of the exhibiting artists.

Alex Gebbie
Untitled (Quilts), 2024
I Can't be Fucked, 2024

Recycled cotton textiles

The three quilts by Alex Gebbie move beyond practical, domestic applications to operate as a representation of self. The recycled textiles in a gingham and checked prints are a pattern that embody her conception of her personality and sense of self. She finds that people often associate these bold and colourful patterns with her, stemming a lot from how she dresses. 'I Can't Be Fucked' incorporates text to bring a sense of irony to her pieces.

Mackenzie Lecchi
Untitled (Carrier Bag
#1, #2, #3, #4), 2024

Recycled textiles and family
memorabilia

The textile works by Mackenzie Lecchi, incorporating recycled textiles and family memorabilia, are part of an ongoing investigation into understanding their heritage and self through their family archive. A collection of familial artifacts and personal items gathered from around their home are contained within pocketed fabric panels.

The carrier bag, a physical or theoretical vessel holds the objects that we deem important, and sentimental, to take home and store for later. In the essence of being human, Lecchi collects familial photographs, letters and sentimental objects that they have come across over the years. As time, location and circumstance have pulled them away from their family and lineage, they come back to this theory of the carrier bag as a way of piecing back together their familial history.

Zach Muir I am my own saviour, 2024

Coloured pencil and watercolour on
wood board, 1200x600mm

Zach Muir's triptych is the artist's meditation on the meaning of transition and queer relationships. The text reads, in Latin, "Dilectus meus: ego sum salvator meus, sed adorabo templum tuum, quamdiu corpus meum patietur." Which translates (according to Google Translate) to "My beloved: I am my own saviour, but I will worship at your temple, as long as my body will allow me." In this work Muir is, in a way, all and yet none of the characters; the saviour, the worshiper, the worshiped, and both the protecting angels. It is very self indulgent in that way.

As someone who enjoys looking things up, Muir provides a list of his inspirations that maybe the audience could look up as well: Paul Cadmus, Jared French, Anthony Cudahy, Paul B Preciado's book 'Testo Junkie', the 1976 film 'Sebastiène' directed by Derek Jarman and Paul Humfress.

Brianna Parkinson Replicant, 2024

Found-object copper soakers,
ceramic, etched aluminium,
found-object copper pipe, wool
felt, velvet, copper oxide, clay
grog, bauxite

Smooth muscle, 2024

Found copper cylinder and
parachute, brass hose fittings,
dust hose, rubber silicone hose, in
utero sound recording

The works by Brianna Parkinson repurpose found-objects in installations that evoke the body while interrogating the power systems that humans have evolved to control the corporeal body.

'Replicant' is composed of three, torso-sized panels that evoke the physical body - the skin (copper), flesh (clay) and bones (aluminium etchings). As the title eludes the materials suggest the merging of machine and human, the hybrid chimeras of a motherless birth. Drawing on research on the body as geography, 'Replicant' presents the spacial body as a space for feeling, for pleasure, for pain and sometimes a space needing protection - a space that is hurt, healed and patched.

Ziggy Raven Golden Kupenga, 2024

Polyester, rock

The concept for 'Smooth muscle' was developed in response to Donna Harraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto', along with readings on reproductive agency and uterine geography. The found copper vessel and red parachute embody the uterus and speak to the potential threats inherent in the artificial, motherless birth.

Ziggy Raven's kupenga was made for the nga toi taketake: fibre and textile paper.

In Maori mythology the patupaiarehe (often translated as 'fairies') were skilled net weavers and fishermen who could not appear in sunlight.

In the legend of Kahukura and the patupaiarehe, Kahukura tricks the patupaiarehe into abandoning a net, allowing him to take it back to learn the secrets of it's construction which he shares with his people.

"All this time he kept a watchful eye on the Eastern sky which was gradually lightening. The fairies were being urged by their cheif to hurry. They were still picking up the last of the fish when the sun came up. In one brief moment when they saw that Kahukura was not one of them the sunlight lit their bodies, and they vanished". (Te Kanawa, K. (1989). Land of the Long White Cloud: Maori Myths, Tales and Legends)

All that remains is the kupenga, crafted by metaphysical beings, lit by the golden sunrise.

Manaia Thomas-Bloom sweat stained, 2024

Found clothing, acrylic paint, embroidery thread, found textiles, lace, canvas, wool felt, buttons

Harshly Stitched, 2024

Steel mesh, sterling silver wire, copper wire, found wire

Aline Yamaura 君がいて、私がいて, 2024

Acrylic paint screen printed on textiles, stickers, card

This pop art-inspired installation examines beauty standards within anime and manga culture in Japan through a feminist lens; particularly focusing on the kawaii movement and its controversial fetishization of young girls. This powerless femininity is expressed by stripping away symbols of agency from the character (mouth, arms, ears). Combined with an exaggerated, voluminous body, this visual tension confronts the objectification of women.

Drawing inspiration from merchandise stalls, the work addresses the otaku fanbase's unwavering 'loyalty' to 2D characters through the consumption of expensive goods. The repetition of prints intend to bring awareness to the concepts of influence of trends, desensitization, the misrepresentation and commodification of women, and gendered power dynamics.

Through this satirical execution, Yamaura challenges the viewer to critically reflect on the societal trends that normalize these seemingly appealing artistic styles.